

## [Arcade Fire](#) by [Luddleston](#)

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**Summary:**

*Who the hell actually tried to get a date in a place that always smelled like nacho cheese and couldn't install blacklights because then it'd be too obvious how disgusting everything was?*

*The Prince of Lucius, that's who.*

The story of the arcade attendant who really doesn't get paid enough to suffer through the train wreck that is watching Prince Noctis, Royal Disaster Gay, trying to flirt with Prompto Argentum, Fellow Disaster.

## Arcade Fire

### Author's Note:

Thanks so much to the ffxv discord for the convo that spawned this pretty dang adorable fic idea <3

Penumbra didn't mind his part-time job, really. The arcade didn't pay well, but in combination with his university scholarship, it was enough to get by, and the hours were flexible enough to fit with a school schedule that changed semester to semester. Also, he'd been cleverly avoiding biohazard training for the past year and a half, so if someone did something truly abhorrent in the bathrooms, he wouldn't be the one stuck cleaning it up.

There was just one problem, really, and that was the painfully awkward attempts at a high school romance that he was forced to witness on the daily.

Honestly, he hadn't expected this. Sure, people came to an arcade as a fun, quirky date sometimes, but who the hell actually tried to *get* a date in a place that always smelled like nacho cheese and couldn't install blacklights because then it'd be too obvious how disgusting everything was?

The Prince of Lucius, that's who.

It had taken Pen a couple of times to realize that one of their regulars was the prince, mostly because he didn't pay attention to the news or to social media, and so he wasn't really familiar with what the guy looked like. Plus, the prince was always wearing either a school uniform or a hoodie and jeans, which didn't exactly jive with Pen's personal image of what royalty was supposed to look like.

Well, either he was secretly in some kind of "Royals! They're just like us!" expose, or Prince Noctis was just weird.

It wasn't a very complimentary thing to think of the next ruler of one's nation, but it was becoming steadily more obvious that it was true.

Prince Noctis always showed up with one other person: a high school boy with blond hair who was overly friendly with everyone and who screeched loudly when he was losing whatever game they were playing. A particularly gossipy coworker told Pen that the kid's name was Prompto, and he was Prince Noctis's best friend. Prince Noctis was trying to make Prompto a little bit more than just his best friend, if you asked Pen, which nobody did.

But seriously, the guy was terrible at it.

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It was a Friday afternoon, just after school let out, which meant the place was about as crowded as it was gonna get. This establishment, Pen had noticed, had a lot of turnover, which meant he was steadily becoming the most senior member of staff on all his shifts, except for the management (and the manager working today could usually be counted on to be in the back room on her phone at all times). It meant nobody else had exactly caught on to who the regulars were, and it meant Pen had nobody to surreptitiously give a Look to when he caught Prince Noctis and his best friend squeezed in trying to play the same pinball game.

Actually, it kind of seemed like the prince was trying to sabotage his friend's efforts, which was about as good a strategy as any, Pen supposed, if you were a high school boy trying to hang out with your crush.

"Ohemgee, no, you can't try to tickle me, that's cheating! You know I can't —agh! Noct!"

Pen stared at the flashing lights over the pinball game until his eyes went a little fuzzy, just wondering. He bet he was the only person in Insomnia who knew the prince was gay. Unless the king—nah, King Regis didn't seem like the kind of dad you just casually came out to over the dinner table.

Y'know, some people might've worried about the future of the nation, or the royal line or whatever, but honestly, Pen thought it was kind of cool. Us queer folks are taking over the world, he decided.

"Hey, Prompto, there's a chocobo behind you!"

"Wait, what? Hey! You little *turd*, I'm gonna fight you!"

"Have fun trying, man."

Alright, so, it would've been cooler if the prince wasn't such a total dork.

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"Not that it wouldn't be awesome, but I think you're kinda reading into things," Pen's boyfriend said, the two of them squished together in Pen's dorm watching some shitty movie that kept cutting out to buffer because either his laptop or the school wifi was terrible.

"You haven't seen these two. Prince tripped over his own tongue three times trying to ask the kid to come study with him after."

"Maybe he's just socially awkward, like, in general."

"Maybe. But I know a gay disaster when I see one."

"Wonder why that is."

"*Hey!*" Rude.

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The snack bar was limited enough that the slushies came in two colors (sorry, *flavors*), so Pen was hard pressed to understand why it was taking Prompto so long to decide between blue or red.

Either that, or he just wasn't paying attention to anything except for the prince's face as Prince Noctis, in a totally normal and not at all sexy way, did something on his phone.

"Hey, uh—"

"Oh! Right! Blue, thanks."

He bounced back over to his companion with his drink in hand—way too much energy in that dude, honestly, Pen wanted to know if there was a way he could absorb some because he was like perma-tired. Prince Noctis looked up from his phone almost immediately and smiled, in the kind of way one would smile at a hopeless crush.

"Hey, Noct, you wanna see me turn my tongue blue with this thing?"

"What? I don't wanna look at your tongue! Gross. That's weird, Prompto," he said, along with a couple more arguments despite the fact that he'd passed up *doth protest too much* three protests ago.

He also stared at Prompto's mouth way too much, holy shit, was there a way for Pen to anonymously get in touch with this dude and tell him to get help? Probably not.

Although, from the way Prompto turned red when Noct stole his drink and took a few sips of it, he was just as bad. And neither of them noticed.

"Kill me now," Pen groaned, to nobody in particular.

"Can't. You've got three hours left of your shift," said his manager, but she was the Good Manager, so she just laughed when he flipped her off behind his back.

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Hera had been working at the arcade for two months, and Pen would describe her as 'the person in his life most likely to get arrested for trying to sneak into Prince Noctis's bedroom'. Sometimes, he worried she'd specifically gotten the job here because of the prince, but she swore up and down she only put in an application because her older brother had worked there when he was in high school.

Apparently, she went to the same school as Prince Noctis (not surprising, there were only so many public high schools in Insomnia). Pen had heard about this at least four times in the past week. He'd only worked two shifts with her.

She wasn't even in any of the prince's *classes*.

Six. He might've been more understanding if the prince was super hot, but honestly, the whole pouty twink thing didn't do it for Pen. Apparently did it for Hera, though.

She was leaning alllll the way over the counter to talk to Prince Noctis, who looked so uncomfortable, Pen worried the guy's skeleton was about to jump out of his body. She also had her uniform polo unbuttoned, and the fact that Prince Noctis seemed to be only made more uncomfortable by that made Pen all the more certain he did not swing in the general female direction.

If Pen was a nicer person, he would've tried to distract her and give the poor dude some space, but... alas, he was not a very nice person. Also, Hera would be pissed at him for weeks if he 'ruined her chances with the prince'.

The person who was much more responsible for ruining Hera's chances with the prince came in the door right about then, and he paused for a second, surveying the scene of his best-friend-slash-crush being aggressively hit on by the girl behind the counter. He frowned for a second, then approached with the kind of determination Pen had only seen him turn on a fourth rematch, and put an arm around Prince Noctis's shoulders.

What in the goddamn. Was one of them finally making a move? Pen was losing his entire shit. He pretended to be restocking the shelves of prizes behind the front counter and did not glance over his shoulder every five seconds, except that he totally did.

"Hey, Noct, sorry I'm late!" he said, overly emphatic about the fact that *he* called the prince by a *nickname*.

Noctis actually... visibly relaxed. Like, as soon as Prompto touched him. "Hi, Prompto, almost thought you weren't gonna make it."

"You kidding? I'm not gonna stand you up, c'mon."

Noctis was smiling again, and wow, okay, this was actually kind of cute. Would've made an awesome romcom if you were into that kind of thing.

"Oh my god, did you see him smiling at me? So cute," Hera said, and fuck, he was gonna have to listen to her talk about that for hours, wasn't he.

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Weeknights were slow, so when it neared closing time, Pen started doing his whole 'checking around to make sure nothing's seriously fucked up' thing early. That way, all they had to do was count the drawers and vacuum, and he could get back to his dorm a whole fifteen minutes early. Which was kind of important, because he had a paper to write.

There was some inconspicuous giggling from the photo booth, which meant one thing: someone was making out with someone in there, and Pen was gonna have to shoo them out. He really wished the arcade would just get rid of the stupid photo booth, since nobody actually used it (phone cameras, duh) except for idiot teenagers who couldn't find somewhere to kiss that wasn't anybody's workplace.

"Hey, we're gonna close soo—"

Alright. He wasn't expecting one of the idiot teenagers to be the prince, that's for sure.

Apparently, things with Prompto were going pretty good, because Noctis was crammed halfway underneath him in the photo booth's tiny plastic bench, both of their faces bright red, and, to Pen's continuing surprise, Noctis's school uniform shirt halfway unbuttoned. Kids will be kids, he supposed, but he would've thought royalty would have a little bit more discretion.

"Sorry," Prompto squeaked.

Noctis didn't say anything, just stared and breathed so hard Pen thought he might pass out.

Pen sighed, pushing his glasses up to rub the bridge of his nose, because it'd already been a long and boring shift, and this was a frankly ridiculous way to end it. "Can you guys just go, I dunno, suck face somewhere else?"

"You don't..." that one came from Noctis, who was still otherwise frozen in place.

"Yeah, no. I really don't care who you are or who you're making out with, just... I'm just trying to do my job. Shoo."

They scampered out without another word.

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Pen couldn't remember the new kid's name, and so he was mentally referring to her as 'the new kid' until he could check the schedule to sneakily figure it out without having to admit he'd forgotten. She was another high schooler, bright and perky and way too excited about working at a place like this, but apparently she was like, *super* into video games. She kept exchanging King's Knight friend codes with customers.

The new kid looked a little less excited now, maybe because she was coming to the end of her shift or because she'd realized just how much gum was stuck to the underside of the tables.

"Uh, hey," she said to Pen, making him suspect she didn't know his name, either. He'd go on believing that, it'd make him feel better about forgetting hers. "So, I just had to chase out a couple making out in the photo booth?"

"Oh. Yeah. You get used to that."

"I think one of them was the prince?"

"Yeah. You get used to that, too."